level in the air due to heavy vehicular traffic, the steps taken by the Government include: phasing out of leaded petrol, notification of stringent emission norms effective from 1.4.2000, improvement in fuel quality and improvements in traffic management systems.

(b) No such law is being framed.

Endangered Bio-Diversity of North-Eastern Region

1003. SHRI PRAFULL GORADIA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether bio-piracy has threatened the entire bio-diversity of the North-Eastern region;

(b) whether famous species of previous flora and fauna are fast disappearing into oblivion;

(c) whether the population of one-horned rhino and tigers in Kaziranga is shrinking because of poachers; and

(d) if so, what steps are being taken to protect the bio-diversity in this region?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) to (c) No, Sir.

(d) Actions that are being taken to protect the biodiversity in this region *inter alia* include:

— Survey, identification and monitoring of the floral and faunal resources by the Botanical Survey and Zoological Survey of India, respectively.

— Setting up of the protected area network consisting of 12 National Parks, 35 Wildlife Sanctuaries and four Biosphere Reserves.

— Implementation of species specific conservation programmes such as Project Tiger and Project Rhino.

— Implementation of management action plans for conservation of Loktak (Manipur), Deepar Beel (Assam) and Rudrasagar (Tripura) wetlands.

In addition, the State Governments are taking steps to discourage the practice of shifting cultivation and enforce anti-poaching measures.

Forest Cover

†1004. SHRI KAPIL SIBAL:
SHRI RAJ MOHINDER SINGH:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that at present the total forest cover in the country is 19.2 per cent only;

(b) if not, the facts in their regard;

(c) whether 33 per cent forest cover is necessary for maintaining healthy environment;

(d) if so, whether Government have formulated any scheme to develop forests in the waste land in the country; and

(e) if so, the details of the scheme, alongwith names of the States where waste land is available at present and the area of such land in each state?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) and (b) As per the State of Forest Report, 1997, forest cover of the country is 19.27% of the geographical area.

(c) Yes Sir,

(d) & (e) 1. A National forestry action plan has been formulated for bringing one-third of the geographical area under forest/tree cover. The programme is aimed at following:

(i) Protecting existing forest resources.

(ii) Improving forest productivity.

(iii) Reducing demands for forest products.

(iv) Strengthening Policy and institutional frame work.

(v) Expanding forest cover.

Afforestation is done by State Government from their own resources, externally aided projects and under following centrally sponsored afforestation schemes of the Ministry;

†Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.